

*Costa: President Obama Should Authorize Water Availability For The Growing Season Now, And Invest In Highways and High-Speed Rail*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – In anticipation of today’s White House jobs summit, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) informed President Obama of several actions he should take to bring immediate economic relief to the San Joaquin Valley. They include bringing water to farm communities and investing in new infrastructure.

“Today’s job summit at the White House is important, and I commend the President for holding it, but our Valley needs more than a summit to fix our economy and bring people back to work. We need immediate action. Today I called on President Obama to use all the discretion within his power to ensure our farmers have water for the growing season and to provide investments in our highways and high-speed rail. While not the silver bullet, both actions will put people back to work immediately,” Costa said.

“It is my hope that the Obama Administration also includes community bankers in the ongoing economic recovery dialogue. They need to be given the appropriate tools to continue lending to small businesses and consumers. Their participation will be essential to any long term economic growth.”

“There is no more important issue to me than our Valley’s economy. The water crisis and a meltdown in the dairy and housing industry have helped created the perfect economic storm,” Costa said. “The jobs summit may be a good forum for sharing ideas with the President, but we need action now.”

The text of Costa’s letter is below.

To see a PDF of the Congressman's letter, click [here](#) .

December 3, 2009

The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Today, as the White House convenes its jobs summit and examines ways to speed job growth in a slow-moving economy, please accept my sincere appreciation and best wishes for a successful event. I am pleased to hear that Mayor Ashley Swearengin of Fresno, CA is one of five U.S. mayors invited to participate today, since the region that she and I represent has suffered from severe economic hardships including a crippling drought, a collapse of the dairy market and precipitous drop in the housing market. Mayor Swearengin's presence is especially timely as she navigates unprecedented fiscal challenges in the city's operating budget which include employee furloughs, fire station closures and over one hundred employee layoffs.

As you are well aware from our prior meetings and my correspondence, California is in the midst of a water supply crisis and likely heading into the fourth consecutive year of a crippling drought. I urge you to keep California's San Joaquin Valley in the forefront of your economic recovery dialogue. I would be remiss if I did not point out that one way to bring people back to work in the San Joaquin Valley immediately is to use all the discretion within your power under the law to get water flowing this growing season. This action alone would allow tens of thousands of hard-working farmers, farm workers, and farm communities to return to the honest work of putting food on America's dinner table.

Water is the lifeblood of the Valley, and without it, our cities and towns have literally been withering and drying out. Unless Mother Nature intervenes and you take action now to implement short, mid, and long-term solutions to alleviate the crisis, all of California will have to prepare for the devastating impacts of the drought. On Tuesday of this week, the California Department of Water Resources announced its projected allocation for water deliveries to two-thirds of Californians at 5 percent of contracted totals. For your reference, this is the lowest initial allocation in State Water Project history. It is my understanding that the announcement from the Bureau of Reclamation will not be far behind. Mr. President, farmers cannot get bank loans to sustain their businesses with water supply delivery allocations this low. Many communities throughout the Valley are facing unemployment levels that rival any in recent memory – up to forty percent. I believe that every region of California deserves a sustainable water supply, and your direct commitment and leadership is necessary to help with California's short-term water needs.

In addition, I am disappointed that the released list of attendees at your jobs summit today did not include community bankers from a diverse cross-section of the country. As you know, community bankers have continued to lend to consumers and small businesses in communities where the largest banks have closed branches or reduced access to credit. The ability to obtain credit is essential to any sustainable growth in the small business sector, and I urge you to invite community bankers to share their solutions for growth with your administration.

The San Joaquin Valley can benefit from additional investments in our highway infrastructure. Just yesterday, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar held a press conference with The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) regarding infrastructure investment. They identified 120 ready-to-go highway projects in California worth \$4.012 billion. Investment in our highways will put people back to work immediately, and improve transit in the San Joaquin Valley.

In addition, a renewed focus on high-speed rail would greatly impact the local economy in

the San Joaquin Valley. Top economists have indicated that direct investment in infrastructure projects is the best way to create jobs and stimulate the economy. The short-term and long-term economic impacts of a high-speed rail system would be tremendous for California's economy. Construction of the system is estimated to generate almost 300,000 jobs, and following construction, the system will provide 450,000 permanent jobs in California. These jobs will have a huge ripple effect into other areas of California's economy such as the service and manufacturing industries. Overall, for every dollar spent on this system, we will see two dollars in return. I urge you and Secretary LaHood to approve California's Track 2 application for federal high-speed rail funds, and would be happy to join you when this funding is announced next year.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and I look forward to continue working with your administration to bring jobs and long-term economic growth to California's San Joaquin Valley.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA

Member of Congress